

Message Text

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ACTION EB-06

INFO OCT-01 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 RSC-01 TRSE-00

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TO SECSTATE WASH DC 4139

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 OECD PARIS 25914

EXCON

E.O. 11652: XGDS1

TAGS: ESTC, COCOM

SUBJECT: JOURNALIST INTEREST IN COCOM

REF: OECD PARIS 24884

1. ON OCTOBER 25 JAMES M. OLSON, PARIS CORRESPONDENT OF "EAST-WEST MARKETS", CHASE WORLD INFORMATION CORPORATION PERIODICAL, ASKED FOR INTERVIEW WITH USDEL ON COCOM MATTERS. HE WAS RECEIVED BY ASSISTANT DEL OUTSIDE OF DEL OFFICE, WITH CAVEAT THAT COCOM ACTIVITIES ARE CONFIDENTIAL AND THAT OUR FREEDOM TO DISCUSS THEM WAS NARROWLY CONFINED. ALMOST ALL OF OLSON'S QUESTIONS WERE EITHER ANSWERED IN VERY GENERAL TERMS OR TURNED ASIDE WITHOUT COMMENT, AND DEL IN PARTICULAR REFUSED COMMENT ON LIST REVIEW.

2. OLSON'S QUESTIONS WERE UNUSUALLY DETAILED AND SHOWED CONSIDERABLE KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT IS GOING ON IN COCOM. HE REFERRED SEVERAL TIMES TO THE LIST REVIEW IN PROGRESS AND ASKED ABOUT AMBASSADOR TURNER'S STATEMENT AT OPENING SESSION. HE SAID HE HAD TALKED TO MEMBERS OF OTHER DELEGATIONS AND FOUND AMONG THEM STRONG SENTIMENT FOR RELAXATION OF LISTS, AND ASKED IF US SHARED IT. IN THIS CONTEXT HE MENTIONED COMPUTERS AND COMPUTER PERIPHERALS, TELECOMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT, "SWITCHING" EQUIPMENT AND CONFIDENTIAL

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"METALLURGICAL" EQUIPMENT (POSSIBLY MACHINE TOOLS WERE

MEANT).

3. OLSON SAID FRENCH INDUSTRIAL SOURCES WITH WHOM HE HAD TALKED QUESTIONED WHETHER IT WAS STILL IN THE FRENCH INTEREST TO REMAIN IN COCOM. THEY FELT THAT AT THE VERY LEAST THE LISTS SHOULD BE SHARPLY CURTAILED. OF PARTICULAR INTEREST WAS HIS SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO POSSIBLE SITUATIONS IN WHICH DISAPPROVAL OF AN EXPORT BY COCOM MIGHT INVOLVE SERIOUS DAMAGE TO EXPORTING COUNTRY'S ECONOMY (A STRIKING COINCIDENCE WITH FRENCH DEL'S REFERENCE TO PARA. 1 (D) OF COCOM DOC. REV (73)3, IN HIS STATEMENT AT LIST REVIEW OPENING-REFTEL).

4. HE HAD ALSO FOUND AMONG OTHER DELS, SAID OLSON, A CONVICTION THAT THE US NO LONGER HAD THE TECHNOLOGICAL LEAD IT ONCE POSSESSED. HENCE, THEY ARE NO LONGER SO MUCH IN FEAR OF OVERWHELMING US COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN CASE COCOM WERE DISSOLVED BY THE DEPARTURE OF ONE OR MORE OF ITS MEMBERS. OLSON ALSO FOUND RESENTMENT OF THE US ENTRY INTO EASTERN EUROPEAN MARKETS AT A TIME WHEN THE US WAS STILL MAINTAINING A CONSERVATIVE STANCE ON EXPORT CONTROLS. IN EFFECT OLSON'S SOURCES HAD ACCUSED THE US OF USING COCOM TO ADVANCE ITS OWN COMMERCIAL INTERESTS.

5. OLSON PROMISED TO SEND US A COPY OF THE ARTICLE HE IS WRITING ON THE SUBJECT.

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6. COMMENT: DEL BELIEVES THAT OLSON WAS PROBABLY TRUTHFUL IN HIS QUOTATION OF MEMBERS OF OTHER DELEGATIONS, ALTHOUGH IT IS UNLIKELY THAT HE RECEIVED HIS INFORMATION FROM HEADS OF DELEGATIONS. IT SEEMS NOT AT ALL IMPROBABLE THAT SUBORDINATE MEMBERS OR TECHNICAL OBSERVERS FROM PRIVATE INDUSTRY MAY HAVE TALKED MUCH MORE FREELY THAN THEY SHOULD HAVE. AT SAME TIME THE VIEWS HE REPORTED INDICATE HOW RESTLESS SOME OTHER MEMBER COUNTRIES HAVE BECOME UNDER COCOM RESTRICTIONS AND HOW EAGER THEY MAY BE TO CHALLENGE OR QUESTION THE US LEAD IN COCOM. THEY ALSO INDICATE THAT SOME OF THE VERY DELEGATIONS THAT COMPLAIN LOUDEST ABOUT LEAKS TO THE PRESS MAY SOMETIMES BE THEIR SOURCE.

7. ON BALANCE, WE DOUBT WHETHER IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO RAISE THIS MATTER IN COCOM IN ADVANCE OF PUBLICATION OF OLSON'S ARTICLE, AND EVEN THEN FEEL WE SHOULD NOT TAKE THE INITIATIVE. IF IT IS RAISED BY ANY OTHER DELEGATIONS, WE COULD EXPRESS OUR STANDARD CONCERN FOR WASHINGTON DATELINE ARTICLE (COCOM PRESS CUTTING 221) CITING "OFFICIALS HERE" FOR INFORMATION ON FORTHCOMING LIST REVIEW, WE ARE IN DELICATE POSITION. WASHINGTON GUIDANCE WOULD BE APPRECIATED.
TURNER

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